



CORPORATE PLAN

2022 -2026

Introduction



As the newly appointed Commissioner I am delighted to introduce this corporate plan for the Commission for Victims and Survivors. As one of the final acts before leaving office in March 2022, The First Minister, Paul Givan and deputy First Minister, Michelle O'Neill announced the appointment of a new Commissioner. I was able to take up that post on 9 May 2022. The appointment of the new Commissioner followed a two-year gap with no Commissioner. Also, during that time, we were in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of Commissioner and the pandemic has undoubtedly impacted the work of the Commission. However, it is good to note that despite these obstacles the small team that comprises the Commission continued to deliver against their objectives, and they are to be commended for how they adapted and rose to the challenges.

We must acknowledge that we are in a period of transition. My appointment has created an opportunity to review the work of the Commission and I have set out three broad areas that I and the team will focus on – Advocacy for victims and survivors, History and Education and Young People. In addition to my appointment, we need to implement the recommendations of the Business Consultancy Service review of the organisation. This was commissioned by The Executive Office before my appointment, and I anticipate that it will address our resourcing challenges.

To add to the complexity of the work the UK Government has started the passage of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill 2022. If the Bill is passed into law, it will have a significant impact on victims and survivors. The Commission has expressed its dissatisfaction with the Bill and believes that it should not become law. In taking that position the Commission has also recognised the reality of the situation and is working with a multitude of stakeholders to seek to improve and amend the Bill.

In this plan we have set out some background to the Commission including our values that will guide all aspects of our work. The key work plan for the period ahead is reflective of the current political situation, locally and nationally, the budget and resources available to the Commission and the knowledge that Ministers have approved a new Strategy for Victims and Survivors 2024-2034.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Jeffers'.

Ian Jeffers¹
Commissioner for Victims and Survivors

¹ Ian Jeffers resigned as Commissioner and left his post on 5 January 2024

About the Commission for Victims and Survivors

The Commission is unique in its construction and remit. It was founded in May 2008 in the aftermath of 40 years of conflict in Northern Ireland and ten years after it was first recommended in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement which states:

“The participants believe that it is essential to acknowledge and address the suffering of the victims of violence as a necessary element of reconciliation. They look forward to the results of the work of the Northern Ireland Victims Commission.

It is recognised that victims have a right to remember as well as to contribute to a changed society. The achievement of a peaceful and just society would be the true memorial to the victims of violence.”

With the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in 1998 as our backcloth, our statutory basis is set out in the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, as amended by the Commission for Victims and Survivors Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. We are a Non-departmental Public Body of The Executive Office and this relationship is governed by a Management Statement Financial Memorandum (MSFM). The MSFM will be replaced by a new Partnership Agreement which will be developed between The Executive Office and the Commission.

The Commission’s principal aim is to promote the interests of victims and survivors of the Troubles/Conflict which is the central reference point for all of our work. Since our establishment, we have made a significant impact promoting the interests of victims and survivors by:

- Helping to improve services provided.
- Providing research to help enable support and understanding.
- Promoting a voice through the Commission’s Forum and our activities.

Specifically, we have contributed to the development of the Victims and Survivors Strategy, the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme and the Regional Trauma Network; provided advice on legacy issues and dealing with the past; and given advice and guidance to government.

Our Governance Arrangements

The Commissioner for Victims and Survivors is responsible and accountable to the First Minister and deputy First Minister and is appointed for an initial period of four years. Ian Jeffers was appointed Commissioner on 9 May 2022 and resigned with effect from 5 January 2024. Interim arrangements have been put in place with the Chief Executive from this date.

As a 'corporate sole', the Commissioner also fulfils the role of the Board to the Commission. Independent oversight and scrutiny of our planning, performance and risks is provided by our Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The Commission's Chief Executive contributes to the formulation of our corporate plan and is designated by The Executive Office as Accounting Officer for the Commission.

We currently have a core group of eleven staff that are organised into three main functions that will help deliver our corporate plan:

- Policy Development, Research and Engagement
- Communications and Public Relations
- Finance and Corporate Affairs

Vision

Victims and survivors are remembered and empowered to shape a future where their voices are heard, and their needs met within a reconciled society.

Mission

We will contribute to reconciliation by ensuring victims and survivors' needs are met, their voices heard and that learning from their experiences contributes to lasting peace for generations to come.

Values

- **Victim-centred** - We put victims and survivors at the centre of all we do.
- **Open and transparent** - We are open, honest, accountable and responsive.
- **Equality and diversity** - We treat everyone equally, with integrity and respect.
- **Impartial** - We are independent and maintain a critical distance to challenge Government and relevant authorities.
- **Quality** - We deliver our work to a high standard.

Our Strategic Drivers

We operate in an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment.

Our environment influences the shape of our corporate plan. Most notable is our contribution to the draft Programme for Government published by the Northern Ireland Executive, the Executive Office's Victims and Survivors Strategy, collaborating closely with our partners, as well as our own assessment of the needs of victims and survivors. These themes are developed further below.

We do not underestimate the challenges of the environment that impact on victims and survivors. Research by the Commission indicates that almost one in four people in Northern Ireland consider themselves to be victims and survivors of the Troubles/Conflict. It is estimated that as a result, up to 200,000 adults experience mental health problems, 40,000 people sustained physical injuries and 3,720 lost their lives.

Our Corporate Outcomes

Our work is enabled by our statutory duties and powers. Considering these, as well as the drivers of our corporate plan as detailed above, we have established four equally important corporate outcomes that we will contribute to over the next four years:

1. The needs of victims and survivors are met and their lives' improved.

2. Learning from the experiences of victims and survivors contributes to a lasting peace.
3. Supporting young people to build a reconciled society.
4. The Commission is an effective and accountable organisation.

The annex to our corporate plan is our Outcome Delivery Plan which shows our planned areas of work for the forthcoming year that will contribute to each of these outcomes. This includes the monitoring arrangements, timescales and responsibilities for each of these activities.

Effective engagement with victims and survivors is critical to our work and their lived experience informs all of our work.

Draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework

By supporting the needs of victims and survivors the Commission makes a substantial difference to life in Northern Ireland and contributes to many of the cross-cutting outcomes in the draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework.

Specifically, the work of the Commission is aligned to the draft Programme for Government outcome indicators as follows:

- Outcome 1 – Our children and young people have the best start in life.
- Outcome 3 – We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect.
- Outcome 4 – We all enjoy long, healthy, active lives.
- Outcome 5 – Everyone can reach their potential.
- Outcome 7 – Everyone feels safe – we all respect the law and each other.
- Outcome 8 – We have a caring society that supports people throughout their lives.
- Outcome 9 – People want to live, work and visit here.

Under each of the outcomes above the Commission aims to contribute to the achievement of the key priority areas which have been set at a population level.

Our Resources

The Commission is core-funded by the Executive Office. We comply with and are committed to public spending rules set out by the Department of Finance in Managing Public Money Northern Ireland 2008. We closely monitor spending, and in-year pressures and easements are reported to The Executive Office through the process of quarterly monitoring rounds.

Our resources are organised in three main overlapping teams that are designed to deliver our strategy in an integrated way.

Whilst the Commission has a line structure showing the internal reporting arrangements, in practice we operate on a matrix style team basis with staff from various functions working together on various activities and projects to support achieving our objectives. This approach is also reflected in our reporting and accountability arrangements.

The structure of the Commission includes the following key areas:

- Chief Executive
- Policy Development, Research and Engagement
- Finance and Corporate Affairs
- Communications and Public Relations

Implementation and Monitoring

Monitoring and reviewing performance against our Corporate Plan is integrated into our governance arrangements so we understand the extent to which we are achieving our outcomes and their indicators. Delivery of the Corporate Plan is supported by an annual Outcome Delivery Plan which sets out in detail our activities, outputs and outcomes.

Risks and mitigations to the delivery of our strategic objectives are outlined in the Corporate Risk Register. We implement a management framework to ensure:

- All staff are aware of the Commission's Corporate Outcomes.
- We are open and transparent in monitoring the achievement of our Corporate Outcomes.
- Responsibility for decisions and quality of our delivery is clearly assigned.
- Accountability for delivery is part of the regular review of our business.
- Risk management processes are in place which enable us to monitor and control those risks which arise, with appropriate scrutiny and oversight by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.
- The Executive Office and Commissioner are responsible for agreement, oversight and scrutiny of the Commission's work.

Our work is scrutinised by the Board, Chief Executive, Senior Management Team, the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, The Executive Office and the Executive Office Committee.

Regular reports monitoring delivery against key elements of our work will be scrutinised with a formal assessment of our annual Outcome Delivery Plan in the Commission's Annual Report and Accounts.

Our Partners

The Commission operates in a partnership together with The Executive Office and the Victims and Survivors' Service.

The Commission, The Executive Office and the Victims and Survivors Service have all adopted an outcome-based approach to their ways of working in delivering the current Strategy for Victims and Survivors which has been extended until November 2024.

The Commission is a critical friend and was involved in the Co-design process in developing the new government Strategy for victims and survivors which is currently under development.

Introduction

Within the context of our Corporate Plan, we have developed an annual Outcome Delivery Plan. This plan sets out our operational priorities and activities for the 2024-25 year.

As we operate on a team-based matrix arrangement, by setting out our various tasks and activities, our staff members can see where their roles contribute to our overall corporate objectives and outcomes.

Budget

In the absence of the Northern Ireland Assembly, The Executive Office has confirmed that our resource budget for 2024-25 financial year is £809,000 plus £47,000 for non-cash costs of depreciation

This will be used in line with public spending regulations to help meet our objectives and further our outcomes.

The following table shows an indicative breakdown of our annual budget.

Table 1. Annual Budget

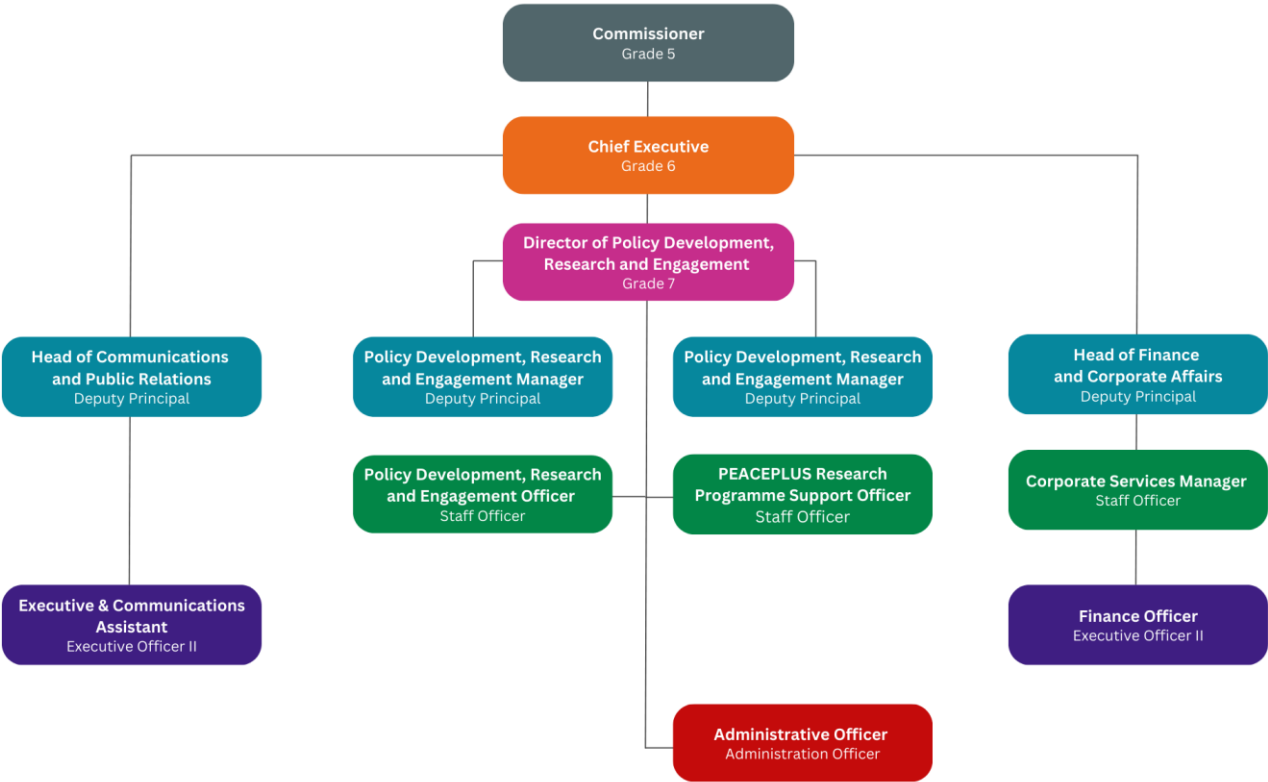
Expenditure Heading	Budget 2024-25
	£
Salaries	580,400
Overheads	150,990
Programme	77,610
Total Resource Budget	£809,000
Capital	Nil
Depreciation and IFRS 16 Provision (Non-Cash)	47,000
Total Budget from The Executive Office	£856,000

Maximising Use of Our Resources

Over the last year we have been reviewing the use of our resources to align them to our corporate objectives to optimise our structure and the way we work together. This is depicted in the organisational chart below which shows the integration of communications across the organisation and the integration of policy development, research, and engagement functions.

Ian Jeffers was appointed as the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors for a four-year term beginning 9 May 2022. He left his post on 5 January 2024 and interim governance arrangements have been put in place with the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer, Andrew Sloan, temporarily promoted. This is recognition that he will not be acting as interim Commissioner but that his workload will be significantly increased.

Organisational Chart



Monitoring, Reporting and Accountability Arrangements

The success of any plan depends upon its effective implementation. Effective internal monitoring arrangements are in place to oversee progress of our objectives at the following levels:

- **Board:** The Commission is legally defined as a ‘Body Corporate’ which would normally be comprised of a Board of Directors. However, as a single appointment the Commissioner solely fulfils the role of the Board and is the Board Chair. Board meetings take place on a quarterly basis. The Chief Executive attends all board meetings and reports on the progress, activities and governance of the Commission to the Board.
- **Audit Risk and Assurance Committee:** oversight and scrutiny of corporate objectives as reported by the Chief Executive on behalf of the management team, as well as assurances of effective performance and risk management within the structure of the Commission (e.g., quarterly). The Commission has appointed three new members of the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee for a period of three years with effect from 1 April 2023.
- **Senior Management Team:** The Senior Management Team is led by the Chief Executive and comprises the Director of Policy Development Research and Engagement, the Head of Communications and Public Relations and the Head of Finance and Corporate Affairs.
- **Team level:** monitoring and reporting of progress of the activities shown in the appendices for Policy Development Research and Engagement, Communications and Public Relations and Finance and Corporate Affairs functions as reported by the senior management team to the Chief Executive.
- **Individual level:** regular discussion with respective manager on individual performance and contribution to activities.

Monitoring at each level will also include analysis of risks that will need to be managed and assurances that will be provided that controls are in place to address such risks. The Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee will seek to be assured that risk management arrangements are working effectively.

Monitoring of performance and the management of risks will also be overseen by The Executive Office as our Sponsoring Department in discussion with the Chief Executive who is also the delegated Accounting Officer. This will be done in line with the proposed Partnership Agreement and annual engagement plan. We anticipate these arrangements will be developed further this year, until then we shall continue with the quarterly accountability meetings with The Executive Office.

We use a standard Outcome Delivery performance report outlined below. This will provide the basis of consistent reporting by the Chief Executive to The Executive Office and to provide assurances to the Board and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee; for the senior management team to report to the Chief Executive; and for heads of teams and individuals to contribute to the delivery of research, engagement, policy development, communications and corporate affairs.

We shall also report publicly on our high-level outcomes in our annual report and accounts that is published in the autumn of each year.

What difference will the actions make?

Corporate Outcome 1: The needs of victims and survivors are met and their lives' improved.

The actions under this outcome seek to understand the needs and wishes of victims and survivors and to articulate issues relevant to them in legislation and Government policy.

Corporate Outcome 2: Learning from the experiences of victims and survivors contributes to a lasting peace.

The actions under this outcome seek to generate discussion of complex issues, such as learning the past, so as to reduce the risk of repetition.

Corporate Outcome 3: Supporting young people to build a reconciled society.

The action under this outcome seeks to inform the work of CVS with young people's views, which are valuable in considering transgenerational issues, and more broadly.

Corporate Outcome 4: The Commission is an effective and accountable organisation.

This The actions under this outcome will ensure that the Commission complies with the requirements set by The Executive Office in respect of organisational governance and the provisions set in the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum.

Corporate Outcome 1: The needs of victims and survivors are met and their lives' improved.
Programme for Government Outcomes: 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8
Budget: £399,509

OUTCOME	OUTPUTS	Timescale
The Commission's participation seeks to ensure that the Regional Trauma Network is adequately resourced with pathways working effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commission's participation in relevant Regional Trauma Network oversight bodies, including the development of workplans. • Involvement in progressing the RTN Research Strategy and Action plan. • Analysis of RTN data being reported into the RTN portal. 	Q1-Q4
PEACE Plus research plans designed, and implementation commenced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping of the two Peace Plus research projects, including establishment of Research Advisory Groups. • Recruitment of Research Co-ordinator fixed term post, and induction. • Delivery commenced of one research project. 	Q1-Q4
Great Britain population key findings and analysis communicated widely, with priority actions agreed and implementation sought.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement plan developed. • Engagement with victims and survivors, groups and decision-makers on research findings. 	Q1-Q4
Priority areas for action in the Republic of Ireland progressed with decision-makers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of engagement plan 	Q1-Q4

Corporate Outcome 1: The needs of victims and survivors are met and their lives' improved. Programme for Government Outcomes: 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 Budget: £399,509		
Comparison of Republic of Ireland / Great Britain / Northern Ireland population survey findings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper developed which analyses key similarities and differences in the three Commission's population survey findings. 	Q1
On-going analysis and communication to decision makers and stakeholders of issues relating to the adequacy of services to victims and survivors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Victims and Survivors Service quarterly reports, with relevant actions taken. Engagement with Victims and Survivors Service funded organisations, and other representative groups. Review of Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme data, with relevant actions taken. Review of Regional Trauma Network data (as available), with relevant actions taken. On-going review of the Commission's standards. 	Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4
Advice to Government drafted and disseminated on the needs of bereaved people and key stakeholders engaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement plan implemented. 	Q1-Q4
The Commission's participation seeks to ensure that the Victims and Survivors Strategy reflects the Commission's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review implementation of the Strategy and provide advice to The Executive Office as appropriate. Undertake actions which fall to the Commission within the Strategy. 	Q1-4 (subject to approval date)

Corporate Outcome 1: The needs of victims and survivors are met and their lives' improved.
Programme for Government Outcomes: 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8
Budget: £399,509

<p>recommendations and is adequately implemented and resourced.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide baseline data gathered from the three population surveys carried out in Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland and Great Britain. • Repeat the population survey carried out in Northern Ireland to update the data and monitor progress. 	<p>Q1</p> <p>Q4</p>
<p>The Commission's participation seeks to ensure that the relevant Government Strategies, including the Programme for Government, reflect the Commission's recommendations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses drafted to relevant Government consultations, including the Programme for Government, identifying interventions required to meet the needs of victims and survivors. 	<p>Q1-Q4</p>
<p>The Commission's participation seeks to ensure that the Independent Commission for Information Recovery and Reconciliation is adequately resourced and operating in a victim-centric manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with the ICRIR to ensure victims and survivors' needs are met and expectations managed appropriately. 	<p>Q1- Q4</p>

Corporate Outcome 2: Learning from the experiences of victims and survivors contributes to a lasting peace.
Programme for Government Outcomes: 1, 3, 5, 7 and 8
Budget: £91,784

OUTCOME	OUTPUTS	Timescale
The Commission's participation seeks to ensure that the Part IV of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act implementation is adequately resourced and delivered in a timely manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work programme developed, agreed and actioned. 	Q1-Q4
Victims and Survivors Forum adequately supported to fulfil its agreed role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work programme developed, agreed and actioned. 	Q1-Q4
The specific needs of groups within the definition of victims and survivors are recognised, understood and met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of briefing papers, based on evidence and engagement, on the specific needs of women and girls. • Engagement plans developed and delivered. 	Q1-Q4

Corporate Outcome 3: Supporting young people to build a reconciled society.
Programme for Government Outcomes: 1, 3, 5 and 7
Budget: £91,784

OUTCOME	OUTPUTS	Timescale
Youth panel provides insights into Commission's work via its agreed workplan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth panel delivers agreed workplan activities. End of year one evaluation of youth panel, with lessons learned for year two of the project. 	Q1-Q4 Q4
Young People in Northern Ireland attitudinal survey undertaken.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scoping, design and delivery of survey of young people's attitudes towards relevant victim and survivor issues. 	Q4
Building for the Future by Learning the Past – action plan implemented with progress in meeting agreed metrics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed priority areas progressed via engagement plan. 	Q1-4
Commission's positions paper on paramilitarism produced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement engagement plan. 	Q1-Q4

Corporate Outcome 4: The Commission is an effective and accountable organisation
Programme for Government Outcomes: 3 and 5
Budget: £225,923

OUTCOMES	OUTPUTS	Timescale
<p>Communications and Public Relations activities that advance overall work programme and raise profile of the Commission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly website audits ensure site accurately reflects work being undertaken. • Develop a digital media Content Plan. • Use print and broadcast media to profile significant areas of work. • Ensure appropriate contracts, software and reporting methods are in place to capture activity. 	<p>Q3</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p>
<p>Skilled, competent and engaged workforce who are supported in their delivery of work programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide learning and development opportunities for all who work in and with the Commission to enable them to perform their job and develop for the future. • Annual and midterm performance appraisal completed for all staff where SMART objectives/targets are set linked to the Corporate and Outcome Delivery Plan and performance is assessed. • Review corporate policies in accordance with agreed review dates. • Continued migration of all business operations to the Microsoft 365 and Teams platform. 	<p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q3-Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p>
<p>Continually review internal operations to ensure they remain effective and efficient.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit plan developed by Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, the Commissioner and Chief Executive and implemented by internal auditors. • Recommendations from Internal and External Auditors implemented within agreed timeframe. 	<p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p>

Corporate Outcome 4: The Commission is an effective and accountable organisation
Programme for Government Outcomes: 3 and 5
Budget: £225,923

OUTCOMES	OUTPUTS	Timescale
Effectively manage public money ensuring value and compliance with the law and public sector guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business cases developed for all projects and approved in accordance with policy. • Post project evaluations carried out within the agreed timeframe. • Manage our budget to ensure that it is not overspent (zero tolerance) or is not underspent by more than 1.5%. • Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24 produced by August 2024 for audit by Northern Ireland Audit Office. Annual Report and Accounts laid by 31 December 2024. • Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Board meet 4 times each year and the Senior Management Team meets 10 times per year. • Corporate and Team Risk Registers are reviewed by Board, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Senior Management Team. 	<p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q3</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p>